

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, April 12, 2006, 11:00 a.m., Rm. 113, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jon Carlson, Gene Carroll, Michael Cornelius, Dick Esseks, Gerry Krieser, Roger Larson, Mary Strand, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Marvin Krout, Kent Morgan, Steve Henrichsen, David Cary, Ray Hill, Brian Will, Sara Hartzell and Michele Abendroth of the Planning Department; Terry Genrich of Parks and Recreation; Nicole Fleck-Tooze of Watershed Management; Mark Bowen of the Mayor's Office; Patte Newman and Dan Marvin of the City Council; Danay Kalkowski of Seacrest and Kalkowski

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: **Comp Plan Text and Neighborhood Centers**

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m.

Steve Henrichsen began by reviewing the schedule for the Comp Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan in the upcoming months. He announced that there will be an Open House on the transportation alternatives on May 3 at Engineering Services.

Henrichsen stated that the work today will focus on reviewing five chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, including Background, Environmental Resources, Information Technology, Community Facilities, and Parks, Recreation, & Open Space.

Sara Hartzell stated that the Background chapter is a compilation of three chapters, including Future Conditions, The People, and The Region. Major changes to the chapter included an addition of a paragraph under Overall Population Growth Projection, the deletion of a paragraph regarding an explanation of the growth rate percentage, and the addition of a paragraph under the Long Rang Regional Planning section.

Strand stated that she would like to add a paragraph in the Long Range Regional Planning section and suggested the following, "This will become a major employment area for Lincoln and Lancaster County and should be considered in our planning process." Esseks offered the following, "The employment opportunities generated by this development need to be recognized and studied when planning decisions are made."

Henrichsen noted that the economy and business section will be reviewed at the next meeting and perhaps it would be more fitting in that section. Esseks stated that he feels it belongs in the beginning. He suggested a phrase be added to the end of the paragraph as follows, Strengthening ties between the two cities and the surrounding rural communities is integral to the region's future success "in promoting recreational, employment and other opportunities."

In the Environmental Resources section, Hartzell stated that most of the changes in this section were due to the Salt Creek tiger beetle status.

Nicole Fleck-Tooze explained that they would like to implement the "rain to recreation" watershed approach to reduce flood damages, protect water quality and natural areas, while providing for recreational and educational opportunities to realize multiple benefits. The concept was developed by Lenexa, Kansas, and it is a good way to bring together several ideas. Terry Genrich stated that it is positive for Parks & Recreation because of the benefits of storm water management and the recreational component.

Genrich stated that he would like to add a sentence in the Native Prairies and Grasslands section of Environmental Resources stating "The acquisition of buffer areas around prairies and other natural areas should be pursued."

Esseks asked if there was a way to spell out the economic benefits in the Environmental Resources section. It was agreed to add the following, "Well managed environmental resources generate and reinforce business opportunities."

In the Information Technology section, Hartzell stated that the paragraph regarding the Mayor's Technology Council was deleted. Carlson asked if it would be wise to leave in some of the guiding principles that came from this group.

Cornelius noted that in The Future of Information Technology section, there is an attempt made to clarify the language about telephones. He suggested the following change from "wireless technology in cellular telephones that allows remote access to the Internet" to "cellular telephones that allow remote internet access". Commissioners agreed that it is important to recognize the importance of technology and that the community should be open to new technology as it develops. They also felt it was important to leave in the bullet item under Strategies that was proposed to be deleted.

In the Community Facilities section, Hartzell stated that there was not a guiding principles section so she added a section from language in other paragraphs of this section as well as new text.

Carlson asked about the strategy of the location of public buildings and ensuring that they support other parts of the Plan. Strand stated that she feels we do not need to keep all public buildings and structures downtown. Carlson stated that he would like language to emphasize that major government functions should be located downtown.

Henrichsen offered two sentences to add as follows, "Location of public buildings should support the policies of the Plan." and "Major government uses and public buildings should remain and be directed to downtown."

Strand stated that it is important to recognize that there are major government offices that currently are not located downtown.

Carroll stated that the transportation system is designed to direct businesses downtown.

Carlson asked if the Commissioners want to have language to state that government offices should be directed to locate downtown.

Henrichsen offered the following to be placed in the Guiding Principles section, "The City's government center must remain downtown. All efforts should be made to locate local, state and federal offices downtown when expansions and relocations are considered." Carlson moved to include such wording in the draft language, seconded by Esseks. On vote, six members voting 'yes' and three voting 'no'.

Hartzell stated that the biggest change in the Parks, Recreation & Open Space section was in the Urban Forest section.

Esseks stated that he would like to make an addition to the Guiding Principles section in the last phrase of the first bullet, as follows: quality of life issues, "including indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities."

Strand stated that she feels it is important to state that we should encourage public and private partnerships to develop recreation and open space. Henrichsen suggested adding this in the Guiding Principles.

In the next portion of the meeting, Dan Marvin and Patte Newman presented a PowerPoint presentation on neighborhood centers. Newman stated that they would like to address the definition of a neighborhood center as work on the Comp Plan progresses.

Marvin stated that the language in the Comp Plan now states that neighborhood centers typically range in size from 150,000-200,000 square feet of commercial space, it is anticipated there will be one neighborhood center for one square mile of urban use, and they should be located approximately 3/4 to one mile apart.

He noted there are two issues to address. First, the market area of a neighborhood centers is smaller than the typical big box. Secondly, "attractor" development opportunities cannot be utilized by a big box in a neighborhood center.

The current layout in the Comp Plan is that neighborhood centers are two blocks apart. Features of neighborhood centers are that the center is designed to provide convenient shopping for the day to day needs of consumers in the immediate neighborhood. Short driving or walking distance for most neighbors is wanted to obtain basic service. One of the conflicts is that the big box potentially starts taking retail opportunities from the neighborhood centers.

The effects of the big box retail on neighborhood centers are that it will affect existing neighborhood centers increasing the use of blight and TIF dollars for redevelopment. The expanded radius will reduce the number of neighborhood centers, reducing service in both new and old areas. There are conflicts between housing and retail centers.

Other retailers like to build around big boxes in order to share the big box customer base. There is pressure to expand the neighborhood centers to accommodate all the new retail that may want to come to the area.

Marvin believes big box retail should be located in areas with good roads and infrastructure, away from designated housing development, and on sites large enough to utilize their ability to be an “attractor” of other commercial development.

According to the International Council of Shopping Centers, neighborhood centers should have a primary trade area of three miles and have an anchor ratio of 30-50%. This means that 60-80% of customers should come from their primary trade area and the share of the center’s total square footage that is attributable to its anchor.

Larson stated the most important part is the anchor ratio.

Marvin stated that he and Newman would like to implement a study to determine where the next regional center should be. They feel it should be in the northeast district.

Taylor commented that even many small retail stores are national chains. The “mom and pop” shops are on the decline.

Marvin stated that they are trying to provide additional guidance that is not presently in the Comp Plan and give homeowners in newly developed areas more certainty and provide better utilization of “attractor” anchor stores in community and regional centers.

Strand stated that it is important to define the big box components.

Esseks stated that we need to have a mix of retail opportunities.

Marvin Krout stated that there are two other issues to be discussed. First, we need to determine the maximum size of a neighborhood center. Second, of the remaining non-anchor retail, we need to determine if those are limited to a certain size.

Strand stated that the argument they will hear is that the Wal-Mart or Super Target will provide many services under one roof. Carroll asked what the difference is between a large retailer with several services under one roof or several small retail spaces providing all the services. Newman stated that for long-term planning it is better to have several smaller stores because of the natural turnover in retail. Larson added that it is important to remember that people want choices in retail.

Krout stated that there is an issue with market demand. If you provide enough space for all the superstores, a whole segment of the local market will be put out of business. If there are neighborhood centers, you have to control and limit the big boxes that come into the community.

Carlson stated that we need to focus on the definition of the neighborhood center.

Esseks commented that he believes we need to have some more information on the future of retail in this part of the country.

Carlson reminded the Commissioners of the meeting in two weeks to review the next five chapters of the Comp Plan.

The meeting concluded at 12:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Abendroth
Planning Department